ED 328 051 EC 300 016

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TITLE Counseling and Guidance for Gifted Underachievers.
PUB DATE Aug 90
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Southeast Asian Regional Conference on Giftedness (1st, Manila, Philippines, August 14-19, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academically Gifted; *Counseling Techniques; Counselor Characteristics; Educational Counseling; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; *School Guidance; Underachievement

ABSTRACT

This review examines literature on counseling techniques for use with gifted underachievers (GUA). The review begins with a discussion of definitions of underachievement and the various types of underachievement. The paper then evaluates types of counseling, counselor variables, length of counseling intervention, and grade level of counseling. Strategies for meeting the needs of GUA are reviewed, including bibliotherapy, study skills instruction, and mentorships. A counseling model is proposed that includes identifying the type of underachievement (temporal or chronic); the characteristics requiring intervention (psychosocial, academic, and career); the type of counseling (individual, group, or family); and the counseling approach (person-centered, rational-emotional, reality, or other). (40 references) (JDD)

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COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE FOR GIFTED UNDERACHIEVERS

Presented

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Paper Presented at

the First Southeast Asian

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Metro Manila, Philippines

August 14-19, 1990

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INTRODUCTION

Themes on underachievement have been discussed over the past 30 years and researchers have conducted various studies related to characteristics and causes of underachievement among gifted youngsters. Educational practitioners and parents are concerned with the change of undesirable, unproductive behaviors and attitudes.

Even though these incessant efforts on underachievement among the gifted have been made, in fact, there has not been much progress to reverse underachievement. The most popular type of intervention is counseling method along with educational treatment. Three types of counseling -individual, group, and multiple (or family) - have been widely used, however, the results are inconsistent on the effectiveness of counseling intervention.

It seemed that counseling has been a " lip service" and did not make a contribution to help the GUA overcome weaknesses. The reports on counselor variables (e. g., sex, age, experience), specific type of counseling methods, and procedures in counseling have been largely neglected. In addition, the results on counseling varied due to inappropriate identification methods, inadequate types of counseling, and lack of trained counselor. If we as educators and counselors really mean to improve GUA's self -concept, grade, and study habit, all the factors mentioned above should be considered carefully.

The purpose of this study is to critically review the literature on counseling technique with gifted underachievers (GUA). In this study, gifted underachiever is used to refer to children who have high intellectual abilities but do not perform up to their potential. This review will focus on : (1) the types of counseling methods which have been used to enhance student's academic achievement, (2) the relative effectiveness of each technique, and (3) counseling variables.

In considering counseling research, two issues should be considered before reviewing the literature on counseling technique- definition and identification of GUA. Finally, strategies for meeting the needs of GUA and framework on counseling as well as

suggestions for the counselor of GUA will be provided for the counselor and school personnel.

GIFTED UNDERACHIEVERS

Conception of underachievement

Fine (1967) suggested that "underachievement is a degenerative process, most often beginning early in life and having cumulative effects... it is a tragic problem, but one that is far from incurable" (pp. 20-21). The definition, types, and characteristics are significant in determining the scope of underachievement and are closely associated with each other in the identification of underachievers. Based on the review of the literature on underachievement, the conception and types of underachievement vary since the researchers have not reached agreement on a single definition.

Underachievement is defined in many different ways. Even though there is no consensus, most of the definitions agree that there is a discrepancy between potential ability and actual achievement (Gallagher, 1975; Whitmore, 1980). In determining underachievement, there are two different criteria by which achievement is commonly measured: teachers grades and results of standardized achievement tests. Shaw (1961) defined : underachiever with superior ability" as " one whose performance, as judged either by grades or achievement test scores, is significantly below high measured or demonstrated aptitudes or potential for academic achievement"(p. 325). Further he cautioned against employing this broad definition fo underachievement for research; instead, he suggested using this definition for the multiple purposes of identifying, understanding, or helping underachievers.

Several investigators, including Shaw (1960) and Shaw and McCuen (1960), defined underachievement as the difference between IQ and grade-point average. In Shaw's (1960) extensive study of underachievers, children were examined in grades 4, 7, and 11. Children who had an IQ of 115 and over on the California Test of Mental Maturity were identified as academically talented. Those who had a grade point average (GPA) of 2.8 or below, or about a "C" and below, were defined as "underachievers"; those with a "B" average or above in grades were defined as "achievers". In another study comparing underachievers with achievers, Shaw and McCuen (1960) defined underachievers by IQ and grades: those who scored in the upper 25% of the population on the Pintner General

Ability Test (IQ over 110) and who have earned a GPA below the mean of his/her class in grades 9,10, and 11. Those whose grade point average was above the average for the class were termed" achievers", while those who were below average in grades were classified "underachievers".

On the other hand, a number of scholars (Anastasi, 1976; Kowitz & Armstrong, 1961; Raph et al., 1966; Thondike, 1963) have contended that underachievement is merely a statistical artifact of testing procedures or errors of measurement. Thorndike(1963), a leading figure in testing and measurement, viewed the problem of underachievement as misunderstanding in predicting achievement. He described the problem thus:

It is necessary to derine "underachievement" as a discrepancy of actual achievement from the predicted value, predicted on the basis of the regression equation between aptitude and achievement. A failure to recognize this regression effect has rendered questionable, if not meaningless, much of the research on "underachievement."(P. 13)

Types of underachievement

Researchers have suggested that underachievement can be either chronic or situational (Barrett, 1957; Fine, 1967; Fliegler, 1957). Shaw (1961) illustrated five different types of underachievers: (a) individuals with low grades but high achievement scores ; (b) individuals with high grades but low achievement scores ; (c) chronic underachievers who consistently, from one year to the next, perform below the levels of which they are capable ; (d) situational underachievers whose underachieving behaviors is of a transitory nature ; and (e) hidden underachievers. Shaw divided hidden underachievers into two categories: the first category is created by the fact that some underachievers not only do poorly on achievement tests and in grades, but also perform poorly on intelligence or aptitude tests. The second type of hidden underachievement occurs in the students of the highest ability: the gifted who obtained high scores on achievement tests and also get high grades but whose teachers sometimes feel that they are achieving below the level at which they are capable of performing.

Fliegler (1957) classified underachievers as two distinct groups: long term underachievers resulting from " protracted neurotic conflict" (p. 534) and situational underachievers who have traumatic experiences in school. Several investigators have viewed underachievement as a chronic type of behavior stemming from the personality style of the child (Mandel & Marcus, 1988; Shaw, 1961; Shaw &McCuen, 1960). Along

with the same line, Shaw (1961) and Shaw &McCuen (1960) have also suggested that underachievement among bright youngsters is not a temporary phenomenon easily changeable in their lives but, rather, it represents a relatively chronic type of behavior which reflects something fundamental in the personality structure of the behavior.

COUNSELING

Two terms of counseling and guidance have been dichotomized in the textbook of counseling. However, for the purpose of this study the terms will be referred to "the processes employed to help gifted students develop as whole persons within the context of the school setting." (Van Tassel - Baska, 1990, p. 2). Both cognitive and effective needs of the GUA will be considered in this study.

Major research on counseling methods and related variables, such as, counselor characteristics, types of counseling, and grade level will be evaluated in this study.

Types of counseling

The literature on counseling intervention to help underachieving gifted have suggested primarily two different methods of counseling - group and individual counseling. In addition, there has been a multiple counseling or family counseling. Family counseling is the most useful in assisting the underachieving gifted to express their feelings and emotions in the presence of adults (Perkins & Wicas, 1971; Shouksmith, & Taylor, 1964).

In 1960 Baymur and Patterson evaluated three methods of helping underachieving high school students and reported the effectiveness of individual counseling. For groups of underachievers were involved : one group of underachievers were provided with individual counseling ; a second group received group counseling ; a third group was given a one-session motivational experience; a fourth group was a control group that received no counseling at all. They found that changing the attitudes of such youngsters is not an easy task, and the results of counseling were not clearly positive. Baymur and Patterson (1960) concluded that:

> While it may be suggested that individual counseling is more effective with personal problems, and group counseling is better with cognitive problems such as improving academic achievement, the nature of group counseling situation would not make such a conclusion justifiable. (p. 88)

The one- session motivational counseling approach seemed an apparent failure. They pointed out that the one-session motivational counseling approach is most commonly used by parents and teachers who attempt to raise the achievement of students. They also pointed out their failure to achieve adequately and exhorting them to do something about it (p. 88).

On the country, Zilli (1971) and Gallagher(1975) reported that group counseling seemed to be the most effective treatment for underachievement because the student benefited from an opportunity to exchange ideas with peer underachievers. Gallagher (1975) recommended group counseling particularly for gifted adolescents. he further pointed out that:

> they seem perceive themselves as struggling for independence against adults, and they much prefer peer's assistance in solving their problems to that of another adult. Another positive gain... is that many of them seem genuinely reassured to find that other persons of their own age are having problems similar to their own. (p. 356)

Broedel et al. (1960) pointed out that gifted underachieving adolescents have a number of unique characteristics that make group treatment especially appropriate for them. One approach to group counseling has been made by Broedel et al. (1960) who worked with four groups of underachieving ninth graders. They concluded that normally group counseling does not result in improved school performance by underachievers; however, school performance may be improved by establishing close cooperation between counselors and teachers which then leads to greater awareness of and provision for the needs of these students. They warned that underachievement is not a surface phenomenon which can be easily modified. Therefore, it requires skillful counseling to achieve even modest results.

Family counseling techniques for underachievers and their parents were developed by Shaw (1960). He hypothesized that the basic problem of the underachiever is a communication breakdown between himself and his parents, causing him to feel unworthy and unaccepted, leading to resentment and hostility and resulting in underachievement. In Shaw's study, the family counseling approach seemed to be successful enough to warrant continuation for another year. Shaw indicated that both the parents and youths realized the value of having parents and youths in the same camp. He found that students were able to talk freely in front of adults and, with practice, could do so with their parents. Shaw indicated that lecturing either parents or students fails to help, but creating a climate where both can learn from listening to each other makes the likelihood of learning greater.

Whitmore (1980) has indicated that most of the research in counseling of underachievers suggests that the family is one of the most significant factors influencing underachievers.

A much more promising strategy for effective intervention is the provision of individual and group counseling regularly within the classroom (Whitmore, 1980). Raths (1961) reported that adults helped underachievers to clarify their attitudes, purposes, aspirations, feeling, interests, and beliefs. He further suggested that schools adopt the one-to -one methodology, but cost and time certainly make this choice an impractical one.

Most of the research pertaining to treatment of gifted underachievers has reported that counseling has been employed as the intervention technique; however, the findings / results are inconclusive due to the methodological weakness and the wide variety of variables of counseling treatment and the nature of counseling.

COUNSELING VARIABLES

Counselor Variables.

The importance of counselor characteristics and personalities in facilitating or hindering counseling process has been emphasized (Rogers, 1942, 1951; French, 1959). Being caring, warm, kind, and considerate are the important characteristics of counselors. Sumption & Luecking (1960) stated the importance of skillful counseling:

"Skillful counseling may free many of the anxieties and tensions of growing up so that the gifted may be better able to pursue formal learning."(p. 144)

Skillful counselor of the gifted has had successful teaching experience and strong professional training, has a wide cultural background, is more non-directive and non authoritarian than teachers of the gifted (French, 1959). There is also a general agreement that self- presentation, age, sex, training, and experiences are crucial factors in counseling. However, the literature on counseling of the gifted underachiever is failing to report these variables. One study on counseling of underachiever reported that the counselor was trained in aliecient-centered method, including a practicum course (Baymur& Patterson, 1960). Brief description of the counselor was not enough to explain counseling variables fully.

A variable on gender of the counselor should be considered in promoting counseling effectiveness when working with GUA. Only one study has been found that generally the

male counselor may be more effective than female counselor with the gifted male underachievers (Gowan, 1963). Overall, the published research on counselor variables in the counseling of gifted underachievers is almost non existent.

Length of Time

A relatively brief counseling intervention is not better than no counseling (Baymur& Patterson, 1960; Shaw, 1962). Several studies showed that the longer the counseling applied, the more effective it appeared to be (Baymur& Patterson, 1960 ; Broedal et al., 1960). Broedal & Patterson (1960) Baymur& Patterson (1960) concluded that short-term counseling of male high school underachievers were relatively ineffective in improving academic performance.

Baymur& Patterson (1960) use three different types of counseling methods to help underachieving high school students. Group counseling or one-session motivational group counseling were compared with individual counseling since group counseling and one-session motivational group counseling are less expensive or time-consuming to utilize for more students. Shaw(1962) also reported on the results of 14 small group counseling of bright underachievers and found no significant differences between self-concept, grade point averages and teacher attitude toward students. It was suggested that brief group counseling does not seem to improve grade.

Withmore (1980) was critical on the amounts of time per week:
"Counseling programs inevitably involve minimal amounts of time per week usually -an hour or two - and normally occur for periods of relatively short duration such a limited amount of time for treatment makes progress very slow." (p. 202)

Grade Level

Miller(1961) suggested that the phenomenon of underachievement are different at the elementary, secondary, and college level respectively, therefore, the counseling services should be differentiated. At the elementary level, the counselor serves as a consultant to teachers and parents to help them understand the needs of children and reduce the underachievement. At the secondary level the role of counselor is to help secondary school students make suitable vocational choices and personal adjustments. Guidance and counseling services for the college underachiever should differ in nature from those of underachievers at the elementary and secondary levels. The counseling program should be

developed to help student adjust to college life; personal-social problems as well as higher aspirations should be included in the counseling program.

Specific Types of Counseling

Most counseling program with gifted underachievers and underachievers were client-centered therapy developed by Rogers. Only one study by Butler- Por (1982) reported that there is a significant gains in a program for preadolescent underachievers in Israel. In her investigation, thirty-six underachievers who received Glasser's theory of reality therapy meetings were compared with 36 matched underachievers in the regular school. The treatment was established on the basis of a contract including a variety of tasks and rewards between the teacher and the child. The tasks were the organization of a social event, or an attempt to reduce the number of irritating episodes in the classroom.

Only two types of counseling techniques, client-centered therapy and reality therapy, were found in the literature. From the comprehensive review of the literature, it was considered that counseling should be differentiated according to the grade level, type of underachievement, and unique needs of the GUA.

And some weaknesses in counseling intervention should be taken into account when we serve as the function of the counselor and implement a new counseling program in order to reduce the incidence of underachievement among the gifted. Whitmore(1980) noted that there are some critical limitation of a counseling intervention. She concluded that counseling program inevitably involve minimal amounts of time per week, which makes progress very slow; the intervention occurs apart from the real world and daily living of the child; and counseling is primarily an intellectual or rational intervention. Related to the methodological problems, Doyle, Gottlieb, & Schneider (1979) concluded that intensive counseling can be effective only when (a) counselors are specifically selected, (b) small numbers of students are treated, and (c) methodology is carefully developed.

STRATEGIES FOR MEETING THE NEEDS OF GUA

School personnel, who can facilitate the unique needs of underachieving gifted students, should organize the program in the area of counseling and guidance. The specific strategies that can meet psychosocial, career, and educational needs of the GUA.

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy can be very useful in helping the underachieving gifted to resolve their personal-social, academic, and career problems. As Frasier and McCannon (1981) stated that biblotherapy can give a vicarious experience to the gifted. Van Tassel- Baska (1990) suggested that one of the roles of the counselor of the gifted is to encourage students read books related to their problems and discuss the issues in their readings.

Biblotherapy is a natural tool for both the underachieving gifted and achieving gifted. Hoagland (1972) defined biblotherapy as "the attempt of an individual to promote his mental and emotional health by using reading materials to fulfill needs, relieve pressures or help his development as a person", (p. 390) Therapy does not necessarily mean to heal problems, but mean to help the gifted change undesirable behavior and improve their positive thinking process. For example, biblotherapy can be utilized for the GUA in order to: 1) enhance their self-concept, 2) develop and change their values, attitudes, and higher level thinking processes, 3) improve problems solving skills by making attempt to use different approaches to a problem with a real life experience, 4) change aggressive or withdrawn behavior of the underachieving gifted, and 5) assist their career education guidance.

GUA shares his or her similar problems with a character through the literature. Halsted (1981) listed three types of biblotherapy-institutional, clinical, and developmental. She suggested that institutional and clinical biblotherapy are used for the students who have emotional and behavioral problems by the mental health professionals. On the other hand, teachers, parents, and school counselors utilize developmental bibliotherapy to meet needs.

Halsted (1981) described the four stages of bibliotherapy-identification, catharsis, insight and universalization. Key feature of using bibliotherapy is to provide identifies, catharsis, insight, and universalization for a reader.

In the first stage, a reader identified with a character through the recognition of personal similarities and the care about the character in the book. The second stage, involves catharsis. Halsted (1981) guoted a psychological definition of "catharisis" : "It < catharsis> is an active release of emotions experienced either first-hand or vicariously. Catharsis goes beyond the simple intellectual recognition of commonalties as in identification... It involves empathetic emotional reactions. " (p. 66) In the third stage

called universalization, a reader recognize that his/ her difficulties and problems are not his or her alone.

Study Skill

In fact, it was reported that gifted youngsters lack adequate study habits and weak skills, and make little effort on those school tasks which they claim are boring or too easy(Newman, Dember, & Krug, 1973; Rimm, 1986; Zaffran & Colangelo,1977). The underachieving gifted become unmotivated their learning due to the lack of study skills. They are not performing up to their potential not because of capabilities but because of study strategy deficiencies and poor test-taking skills.

Therefore, if they learn to use the effective study skills they will perform better than before. In the past, parents and school practitioners assumed that students don't get a good grade because they don't have the ability to do achieve. Nowadays, researchers and teachers have agreed on the notion that the lack of study skill and poor test-taking skills lead the gifted to underachieve.

General counseling methods are the most widely used, however, they did not appear to be effective to improve self-concept (Dowall & Colangelo, 1982), are time consuming and costly, and showed inconsistent results (Broedel, Ohlson, Proff &Southard, 1960). Direct study skill instruction is useful for the GUA (Crittenden, Kaplan, &Heim, 1984; Reddings, 1990). One study by Crittenden et al. (1984) showed that there were gains in their study skills with the students who showed above average on individual intelligence tests and group achievement tests, but were not performing at the level that they or others wanted.

In a recent study Reddings (1990) compared underachieving gifted adolescents with the achieving gifted on their performance. The results of this study revealed that gifted underachievers show deficits in analytical problem solving and detail-analysis, and suggested thst these skill deficit should be taught by the counselors. He went on to say that " Counselors can help motive underachievers by explicitly pointing -out their weakness in analytical problem solving. " (p. 72) GUA need to be taught these skills and strategies by modeling and work with other GUA through group counseling and practice problem solving (Reddings, 1990).

Educators and counselors could help the GUA by motivating the relationship between learning efforts and outcomes ; by recognizing and improving their study skills (Rimm,

1986). That is counselors should emphasize that these weaknesses are not due to a lack of ability but to a lack of efforts or motivation (Reddings, 1990).

Mentorship

The use of community resources, members of community group, and parents is an important contributing factor in the program for the GUA. Sisk (1987) suggested that underachieving gifted students reveal their needs to work with the mentor through case study. She stated that through the mentor intervention underachieving gifted students improve achievement, demonstrate better study skills, and decrease the rate the absenteeism.

Therefore, mentor program can be utilized the gap df needs unment in the (regular) classroom for the GUA. They need to have a real life role -model who can give them an insight into a professional world. Mentor program provide guidance into the career and assistance in the college admission for the GUA.

Mentorship allows the GUA to work with professionals and learn more about their career options on a daily basis. They need to explore career options through independent study and firsts-hand experience. Counselors and school personnel should arrange mentorship program for the GUA.

IMPLICATIONS

All factors discussed above should be considered in dealing with the GUA. The components of the proposed counseling model include the identification of characteristics and needs, types of underachievement, the types of counseling, and the specific types of counseling. The identification of characteristics and needs is the first step in counseling model. Next, types of counseling can be determined in terms of the types of underachievement.

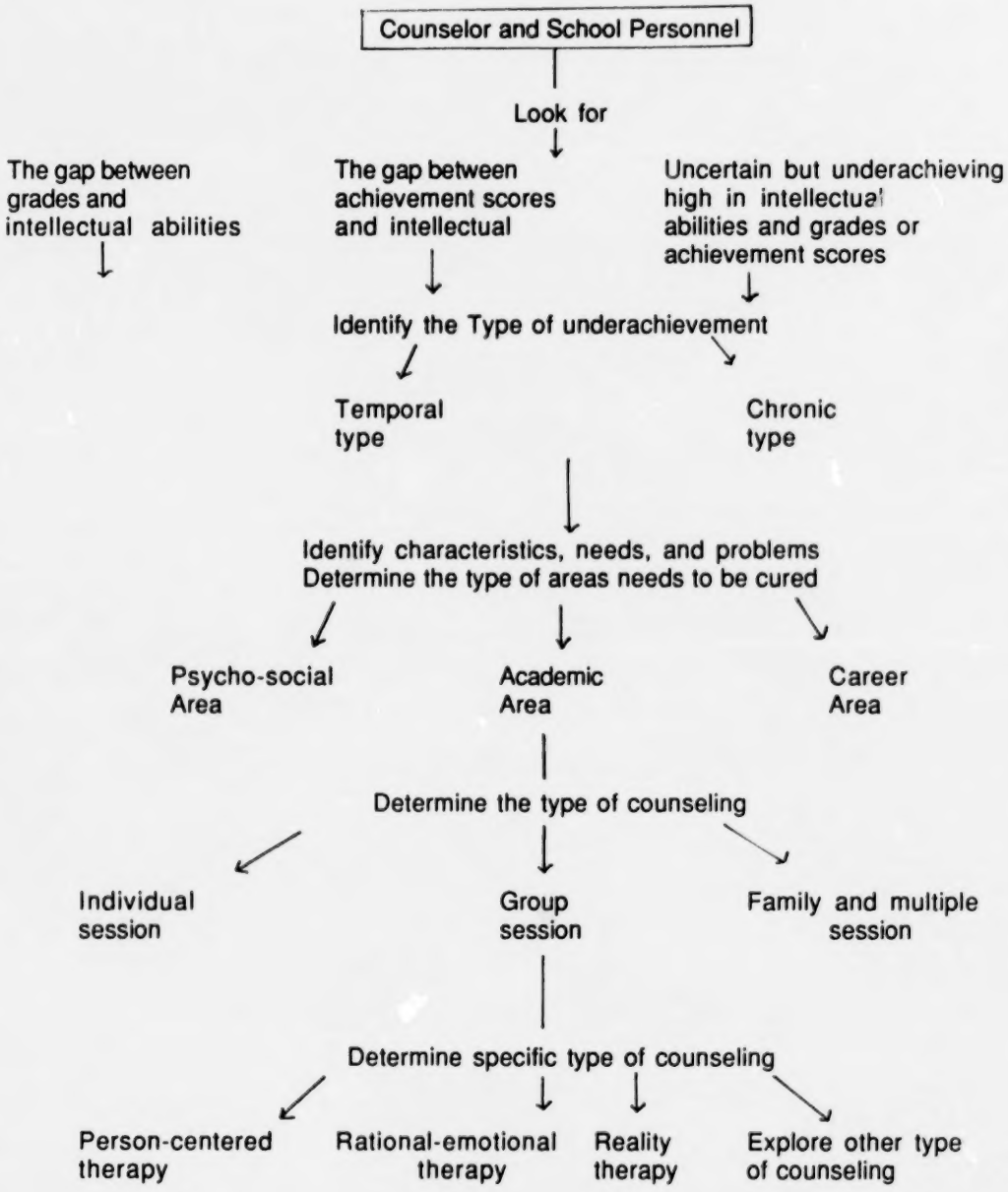
In this study, the proposed counseling model will include 1 experiential, 1 behavioral, and 1 cognitive /action oriented model. Counselor and people who serve as the role of counselors for the GUA can choose the specific type of counseling according to the features of the problem.

According to Corey's (1982) view, practitioners should pay more attention to the client's feeling, thinking, and doing. He stated that a complete therapy system should include all three of these aspects of the client : the experiential facet stressing the role of feeling, the cognitive factor which thinking should play, and action part when learning occurs by doing.

Person - centered therapy, developed by Carl Roger, is a nondirective approach based on a subjective view of human experiencing. It gives more responsibility to the clients in dealing with personal problems. Reality therapy is a form of behavior modification focuses on present behavior. William Glasser developed this therapy stressing a client's strengths which a client learn more realistic behavior through counseling. Rational-emotive therapy was developed by Albert Ellis. It is a cognitive and action-oriented model of therapy stressing the role of thinking and belief systems as the root of personal problems.

Counselors and school personnel could implement the counseling according to the proposed counseling model. Strategies for meeting the needs of GUA - bibliotherapy, study skill, and mentorship - could be utilized in either individual or group counseling procedure.

PROPOSED COUNSELING PLAN


Counselor and School Personnel
Look for
The gap between grades and intellectual abilities
The gap between achievement scores and intellectual
Uncertain but underachieving high in intellectual abilities and grades or achievement scores
Identify the Type of underachievement
Temporal type
Chronic type
Identify characteristics, needs, and problems
Determine the type of areas needs to be cured
Psycho-social Area
Academic Area
Career Area
Determine the type of counseling
Individual session
Group session
Family and multiple session
Determine specific type of counseling
Person-centered therapy
Rational-emotional therapy
Reality therapy
Explore other type of counseling

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